



Dulles Direct Newsletter September 2013

Welcome to the September Dulles Direct Newsletter. September can be a challenging month—I know it has been in my home. It takes time to settle back into a routine with the kids going back to school and activities starting up. And of course traffic is terrible just about everywhere—it has been just as painful for me as it has been for you. Hopefully, we'll see commutes start to ease a bit as we get back to “normal.”

The Board of Supervisors is also back to work and we've also been busy. I'll discuss some of the biggest issues below. I also want to call attention to some important meetings coming up in the next few weeks, including a VDOT information session on the Bi-County Parkway on Tuesday, October 1, my fall Dulles Direct Town Hall meeting on Thursday, October 3, and VDOT's public hearing on the Braddock/Pleasant Valley intersection on October 9. You'll find details on those meetings at the end of the newsletter.

DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES

Poland/Edgewater—Further Changes Coming

If you've been through the Poland/Edgewater intersection, you know that the temporary roundabout is now in place. As promised, VDOT has been watching traffic patterns and driver behavior carefully. Overall, we're pleased with how the intersection is performing. Delays are significantly less on Edgewater than they were before, and the roundabout is slowing traffic down. However, based on what we've seen, we will be making some changes to the design in the coming days. Field conditions dictated a change in the placement of some of the flex posts, resulting in a less-curved section on the west side of the roundabout (South Riding side) than was originally intended. As a result, vehicles are entering the roundabout from the north side of

Poland Road too fast and don't need to slow down as much as we want them to. VDOT crews will be working to make some changes in the location of flex posts to rectify this. We are also looking at some of the signage placements.

One of the biggest challenges is that some drivers simply aren't aware of the right way to move on a roundabout. [This video](#) provides a helpful explanation (note--this isn't an official VDOT/County video, just something that has been making the rounds that is helpful). Over time, we expect these sorts of problems to be reduced as drivers become more familiar.

Braddock/Pleasant Valley

Hopefully, all of you saw the email update I provided on Braddock/Pleasant Valley. (If not, it was sent on September 19). As I mentioned in that update, the project cost has increased by \$1.4 million, and Delegate Ramadan and I are doing everything we can to obtain the additional funds. I am optimistic that we will be able to work it out and keep the project moving.

As I also mentioned, I need your help to participate in VDOT's public input process. The Virginia Run HOA in Fairfax County is trying to flood VDOT with comments opposed to this much-needed improvement. Their opposition is misguided. While we certainly do hope to see improvement in east-west traffic once the Route 50 project is complete, we know that there will still be demands on Braddock Road. The 50 project alone will not eliminate the need to fix the intersection, as the HOA claims.

The official public hearing on the project is on Wednesday, October 9, at Ormond Stone Middle School, 5500 Sully Park Drive, Centreville, VA from 6-8pm. There will be informational presentations on the design plans and you will have the ability to fill out comment cards and share your views with VDOT. I have also arranged for an informational public meeting on this project at Little River Elementary School on Thursday, October 17 from 7-9pm. I know that the South Riding meeting will be more convenient for most of you, and we are working on providing a means to share comments at that meeting as well. However—we still need Loudoun residents to come to the official VDOT hearing on the 9th. It is important that VDOT sees how badly this project is needed and hears directly from all of you who suffer with this intersection every day.

Unfortunately, the hearing conflicts with a Board of Supervisors Public Hearing, so I won't be able to attend. However, I trust that all of you will make your voices heard in my absence!

Route 606 Project Update

Progress continues on the design portion of the Route 606 Widening project. On Monday morning, I will join Delegate David Ramadan, Chairman Scott York, and officials from VDOT and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority at a ceremony to memorialize our funding and design agreement on 606.

Earlier this month, VDOT asked the Board to review and endorse the current design before they move forward in issuing a Request for Proposals in October. It is important to note that this is not necessarily the final design, and changes may be coming throughout the process. Based on

the feedback I have been receiving from constituents, I amended the proposal to indicate Loudoun County's preference for a number of changes. The Board voted in favor of my amendments, which were the following: First, I asked VDOT to reduce the current 200 foot right of way (ROW) instead of reducing the scope of the overall project if cost-savings are needed. The design plan is for an ultimate condition of 6 lanes, within 200 feet of right of way (although this project will widen 606 to four lanes). 200 feet is more than is needed for six lanes, even with the inclusion of a shared-use path. VDOT is seeking the additional right of way to allow for maximum flexibility and to accommodate additional features in the future, such as dedicated bus or HOV lanes. I'm not opposed to that—but if something has to be reduced, I'd rather see it be right of way acquisition than other design elements that are critical. It won't be easy to reduce the right of way because the design builds lanes at the outer perimeter—so that any future expansion would be in the middle. However, there may be specific spots where less could be acquired to save money—if we are over-budget.

Second, my motion instructed County staff to work with VDOT to ensure that sound barriers are provided along the full frontage of the Loudoun Valley Estates III HOA property. The current design includes sound barriers, but they would not cover the entire frontage of LVE III. I am working with VDOT to have that modified and wanted to get the Board of Supervisors on the record in support.

My last amendment had to do with access to a storm water management pond that will be built on the west side of LVE III. My amendment requests that access to the pond be provided via Overland Drive rather than the residential area next to it, to avoid disruption to the community.

The Board also made it clear that we prioritize the shared use path. The path has been separated from the project and is going out to bid as a separate phase, because there is concern that there may not be enough money in the budget to include it. However, the Board of Supervisors made a strong statement in support of the shared use path, which is essential considering the proximity to Metro in this area. If the project budget is not sufficient to fund it, I have discussed with VDOT the need to acquire additional funds, potentially from different sources, to cover the cost. This will be an ongoing issue that the County will be watching carefully.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Board Requests Study of Alternative Alignments for Dulles Airport Western Access Road, Update on Bi-County Parkway

Currently, VDOT is studying alternatives for a proposed Dulles Air Cargo, Passenger, and Metro Access Highway that would connect from Route 50 at the intersection of Northstar Boulevard (Rt. 659 Relocated) to Dulles Airport's western boundary. Together with Supervisor Clarke, I brought forward an item requesting VDOT to add an alternative alignment to their study. Requesting this addition does not endorse this alignment or any other. The Board supported our item and the request is going forward. My goal is to ensure that VDOT studies all viable alternatives, so that all viable options are on the table. You can find out more information about this study from VDOT by [clicking here](#).

The alternative alignment I requested be studied was originally proposed by the Washington Airports Taskforce as part of their comments submitted at a public information meeting held by VDOT in June. This alternative would utilize express lanes in the median of Route 50 that would be specifically dedicated for airport or through traffic and maintain separate lanes for local traffic. There would also be a series of under passes that would allow all current intersections on Route 50 to remain open, preserving access for all of the residents and businesses in Dulles South.

The other alignments currently being studied by VDOT include Alternative #1, a no build option which I think is problematic, at least if the Bi-County Parkway is built since that traffic will have nowhere to go; Alternative #2, a new route along the southern edge of the Broad Run, north of Arcola Road; Alternative #3A, an elevated highway in the median of Route 50; and Alternative #3B, which makes Route 50 limited access based on the Countywide Transportation Plans (CTP) plan for interchanges at major intersections along Route 50 with all local access provided by parallel roads. The Board of Supervisors, at the Transportation Summit in July, had previously requested VDOT study a variation of Alternative #3B which in addition to interchanges increased the ultimate condition to eight lanes from the currently approved six.

My fear is that there are not enough intersections in #3A and #3B to accommodate all the residential growth that has occurred. VDOT's initial study shows that local roads would suffer if the only access points are Loudoun County Parkway, Gum Spring Road, and Northstar Boulevard. The alternative I brought forward would include flyovers at additional intersections to allow for greater access. At this point, we do not have a timeframe on when the studies will be completed, but I will keep you updated.

Bi-County Parkway

It is important to note that this study is separate from the Bi-County Parkway, which would run from Route 50 to the south. There continues to be a lot of discussion and quite frankly a lot of politics surrounding this road. To me, it is relatively straightforward: we need an additional north/south route. We also need east-west routes—but it isn't an either/or question. Gum Spring road is simply not adequate to handle all the traffic. Already, I see trucks using Gum Spring routinely. Imagine what it will be like in ten or twenty years if there is no other north/south route. I have always been in favor of studying the Bi-County Parkway and trying to work out an acceptable route (the current plan is to continue Northstar Boulevard to the south).

There have been legitimate concerns raised about the exact route of the road, and plans that could result in a portion of Route 29 to be closed to the south. However, in my discussions with VDOT, they have made it clear that nothing is set in stone and they want to work with Loudoun and Prince William to do what makes sense. Therefore, I don't support abandoning the study of this project. I think it would be shortsighted to throw the baby out with the bath water and kill the entire idea, as some have advocated. Instead, we should put all the politics aside and try to work out a solution that will work for all of our residents. With 1 million people residing in Loudoun and Prince William in the near future, both counties owe it to our constituents to find

ways to move people around. We have the opportunity to actually get ahead of what will be a major area of gridlock in the future—for once—and we ought to take it.

VDOT will be holding an informational meeting on the Bi-County Parkway on Tuesday, October 1 at John Champe High School from 6-9pm. I'm sure there will be plenty of special interest groups on both sides that turn out, but I hope that citizens who have heard about this but have never really seen the plans come out and take a look and ask questions of the engineers.

Loudoun County Joins Investigation into Greenway Tolls

Each month I hear from residents frustrated with either the high tolls on the Greenway or the traffic congestion caused because so many residents use other roads to avoid the tolls. For years, there has been little hope that anything could be done to change it, because the Greenway is a private road. However, Delegate David Ramadan uncovered a clause in the State Corporation Commission's (SCC) rules that allow the SCC to actually lower tolls if we can prove that the residents of Loudoun are avoiding the road because of high tolls.

Delegate Ramadan has filed a legal challenge to the Greenway and its owners, Toll Road Investors Partnership II, LP (TRIP II). Since January, the SCC has held hearings, receiving testimony from residents and public officials, including myself, and will also hold a formal judicial hearing on November 12, 2013 in Richmond.

Since Loudoun County residents will be most affected by these proceedings, I brought forward an item instructing the County Attorney to petition the SCC to become a participant in the case (PUE-2013-00011). The Board supported my motion unanimously. TRIP II filed a motion opposing the County's involvement, but the SCC Hearing Examiner ruled in favor of the County and granted us intervener status in the case, which will allow us to cross-examine witnesses and become a formal part of the proceedings.

The merits of this case are significant. According to §56-542(D) of the Code of Virginia: "The Commission also shall have the duty and authority to approve or revise the toll rates charged by the operator. Initial rates shall be approved if they appear reasonable to the user in relation to the benefit obtained, *not likely to materially discourage the use of the roadway* and provide the operator no more than a reasonable rate of return as determined by the Commission. Thereafter, the Commission, upon application, complaint or its own initiative, and after investigation, may order substituted for any toll being charged by the operator, a toll which is set at a level which is reasonable to the user in relation to the benefit obtained and which will not materially discourage use of the roadway by the public and which will provide the operator no more than a reasonable return as determined by the Commission" (*emphasis added*).

The law allows the SCC to revise the toll rates if it can be proven that the high tolls "materially discourage use of the roadway." There is not a doubt in my mind Delegate Ramadan has proven that in the hearings thus far and will continue to provide testimony and evidence supporting his case. To date, he has taken on the Greenway and their ownership by himself, using his own resources, but I know he has put together a strong pro-bono legal team, and I'm pleased that the Loudoun County Attorney will now also be involved in this effort.

Avonlea Reserve Approved

This month the Board approved an application from Toll Brothers for Avonlea Reserve, which rezoned nearly 28 acres from R-1 and Commercial Light Industry (CLI) to R-8, allowing up to 109 single family attached dwelling units, adjacent to the existing Avonlea Community. As I've discussed, I evaluate each rezoning on a case by case basis, with my primary criteria being the overall good of the community. Because this application was in the Dulles District, I handled most of the negotiations with Toll Brothers. Ultimately, we were able to strike what I believe was a good deal for the County.

I started off with a major concern with this application. Only a half section—two lanes—of Tall Cedars Parkway is currently being built between Pinebrook Road and Riding Center Drive through an existing proffer from Avonlea. This new section of Avonlea would be utilizing Tall Cedars for access. The County has a project to build four lanes of Tall Cedars between Gum Spring and Pinebrook. The proffer to build the remaining two lanes between Pinebrook and Riding Center is sitting with a different project that is unlikely to move right now. I really did not like the idea of opening up a brand new road that is not actually complete—because it will go from four lanes to two lanes in the middle.

After negotiation, Toll Brothers agreed to provide the County with its entire regional road contribution--\$657,000—*before* any homes are built. One of the most frustrating things about our area is that homes are built before infrastructure is in place, so this represents a departure from previous practice, and I hope begins to set a new precedent. In addition, Toll Brothers is required to obtain the design plans for the remaining section of Tall Cedars, and provide it to the County. Toll Brothers will be providing an additional \$2.1 million to the County to pay for capital costs—schools, public safety, etc.

Utilizing the upfront road contribution and other funds, I have asked staff to prepare an item to initiate a County project to complete the remaining half section of Tall Cedars. My plan is to incorporate this into the existing County project that will build Tall Cedars between Gum Spring and Pinebrook. In doing so, I anticipate some cost savings. The end result will be that when Tall Cedars opens, it will be all four lanes from Stone Ridge to South Riding. My plan is still pending Board approval, and will be coming back to the Board this fall. I will keep you updated.

It is always difficult to allow for more housing, especially with congestion being so bad. However, at least this project will help contribute to completing a major road connection in our community. In addition, the existing Avonlea HOA came forward in support of the application, because they did not want to see the adjacent parcel to their homes be used for something different and less attractive. Also, the previous rezonings on the adjacent parcels made the applicant's case strong from a legal perspective. Given all those factors, I was comfortable supporting the application.

At the same Board meeting, however, I opposed an application to rezone a section of the University Center section of Ashburn, although I was in the minority. The application was

approved on a 6-3 vote. The circumstances were different than the Avonlea application and I reached a different conclusion on the merits of the case.

FY2015 Fiscal Guidance

Although we are only a few months into FY2014, the Board has already started work on the FY15 budget, which will need to be approved by April of 2014. The Board voted this month to instruct the County Administrator to draft several budget options including 1) an equalized tax rate budget, where there is no change to the average tax bill and 2) a tax rate of two cents below the current rate. It is useful during the budget process to have options from the County Administrator regarding potential areas of cost savings. The Board also instructed staff to reflect the Board's transportation priorities in both draft budgets, including maintaining the dedicated two cent funding stream for transportation, which was first implemented in the FY14 budget. This dedicated funding stream for transportation helps the county to address immediate road and intersection projects that might otherwise be delayed because of lack of funding at the state level. The County Administrator will present his proposed budget in January, and then we will go to work. It will be a very challenging year because Virginia will have a new Governor who will be submitting his own budget later in the process than normal.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dulles Direct Town Hall Meeting on October 3

I will hold my quarterly Dulles Direct Town Hall meeting on **Thursday, October 3** at 7:00pm at Mercer Middle School located at 42149 Greenstone Dr, Stone Ridge, VA. I am pleased to be joined at this meeting with Dulles District School Board Representative Jeff Morse. Jeff and I will both give updates and then answer any and all questions.

Bi-County Parkway Information Meeting

VDOT will hold a public information meeting on the Bi-County Parkway on **Tuesday, October 1** from 6:00pm to 9:00pm at John Champe High School located at 41535 Sacred Mountain Street in Aldie. Residents may stop by anytime during this time period to view maps and documents and ask staff members about the project. The proposed Bi-County Parkway is a planned 10-mile, four-lane highway, intended to reduce north-south congestion, improve safety and better link communities.

Braddock and Pleasant Valley Intersection Public Hearing

VDOT will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, October 9** from 6:00pm to 8:00pm at **Ormond Stone Middle School located at 5500 Sully Park Drive, Centreville, VA**. Design plans will be available for review and staff will be present to answer questions.

Later in October, I will be working with VDOT to host a public information session closer to residents in our district. However, it is still important for you to attend the "official" public

hearing mentioned above. The local session will be held on **Thursday, October 17** from 7:00pm to 9:00pm at Little River Elementary School located at 43464 Hyland Hills Street in South Riding.

Should you not be able to attend either of these meetings, you may submit comments to Mr. Leonard “Bud” Siegel, P.E. through regular mail at VDOT District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or through email at meeting_comments@vdot.virginia.gov. Please reference “Braddock and Pleasant Valley Roundabout” in the subject line.

Science and Engineering Career Fair at Dulles Town Center

Congressman Frank Wolf is partnering with the National Science Foundation to sponsor a science and engineering career fair for middle and high school students, teachers and families. Come see how scientists and engineers create innovations that improve our health, address future challenges and enhance the quality of our lives. The career fair will take place September 27 and 28 at Dulles Town Center from 10am to 7pm (today) and 10am to 5pm (Saturday). For more information, you can view a flyer [here](#).

Free Teen Driver Training Program

Ford Driving Skills for Life will be hosting a free teen driver training program at Dulles Airport (Purple Public Parking Lot, 44930 Rudder Road) on October 12 and 13. Developed in 2003 in conjunction with the Governor’s Highway Safety Association, this program allows teens to drive specially equipped vehicles on road courses under the supervision of professional instructors, improving their skills in four key areas: hazard recognition, vehicle handling, space management and speed management. Registration is limited and signed consent forms are required. For more information visit www.drivingskillsforlife.com. Please bring the signed waiver form and your teen’s driver’s license or permit with you to the event.

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